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Attorney Docket: 3431.1US

*C2* 19. (Twice amended) The lock washer of claim 15, wherein, following [the] a release of a compressive load, said tube engagement flanges are configured to flex into said relaxed state.

IN THE DRAWINGS:

FIGs. 1 and 11 have been amended as set forth in the Letter to the Official Draftsperson filed herewith.

REMARKS

Claims 11 and 19 have been amended to correct informalities therein. These amendments are made without prejudice or disclaimer. It is respectfully submitted that claims 11 and 19 are now in condition for allowance.

The drawings were objected to as failing to comply with 37 C.F.R. § 1.84(p)(5) as not including reference characters 51 and 26, which were mentioned in the specification. Reference character 51 has been added to FIGs. 1 and 11. FIG. 11 includes reference character 26 above and just to the right of the center of the drawing, between reference characters 52 and 30.

The drawings were also objected to as failing to mention reference characters 36 and 52, illustrated in FIGs. 1 and 11, in the specification. Reference character 36 is described at page 6, line 5 of the specification as originally filed. Reference character 52 is described at page 5, line 11 of the specification as originally filed.

Reference character 49 was also inadvertently omitted from the drawings. Reference character 49 has been added to FIG. 11.

A Letter to the Official Draftsperson is filed herewith, with amendments to the drawings marked in red.

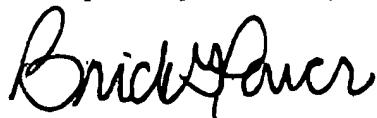
Reconsideration of the referenced application is respectfully requested.

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**Conclusion**

Claims 2-8, 10-12, and 14-19 remain pending in the referenced application. Applicant respectfully solicits a notice of the allowance of these claims at an early date. If any issues remain preventing the allowance of any of the pending claims, the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact the undersigned.

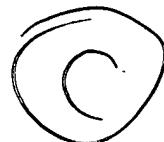
Respectfully submitted,



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Date: February 2, 2000

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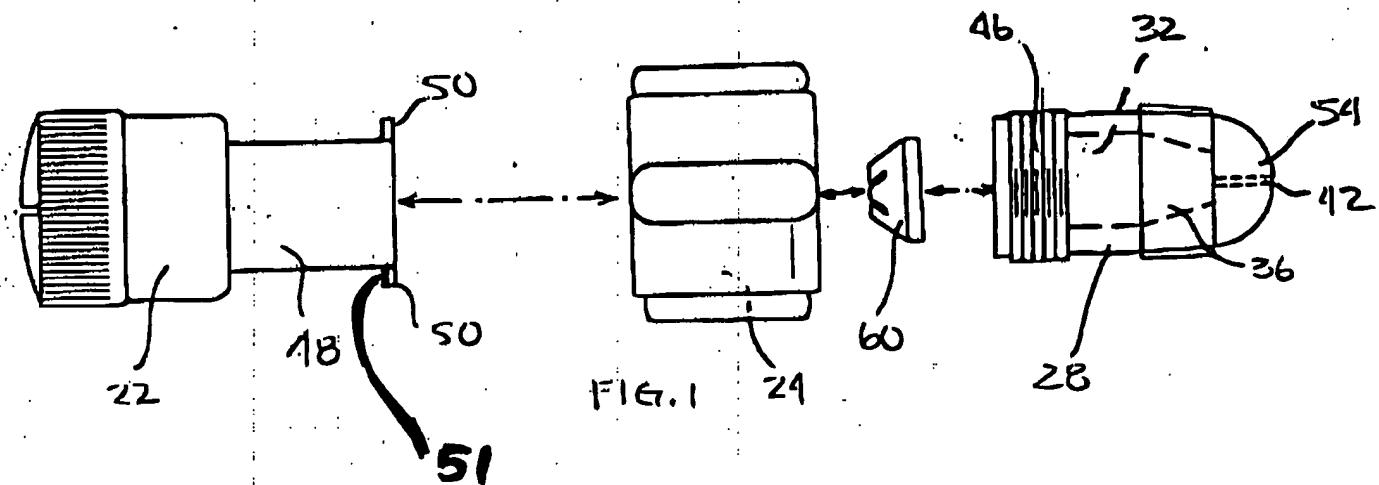


FIG. 1

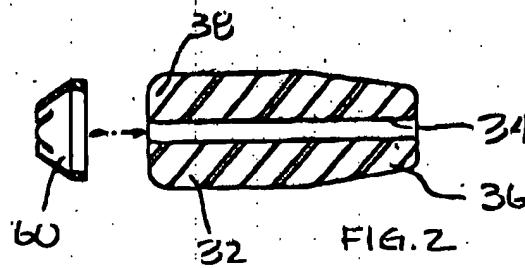
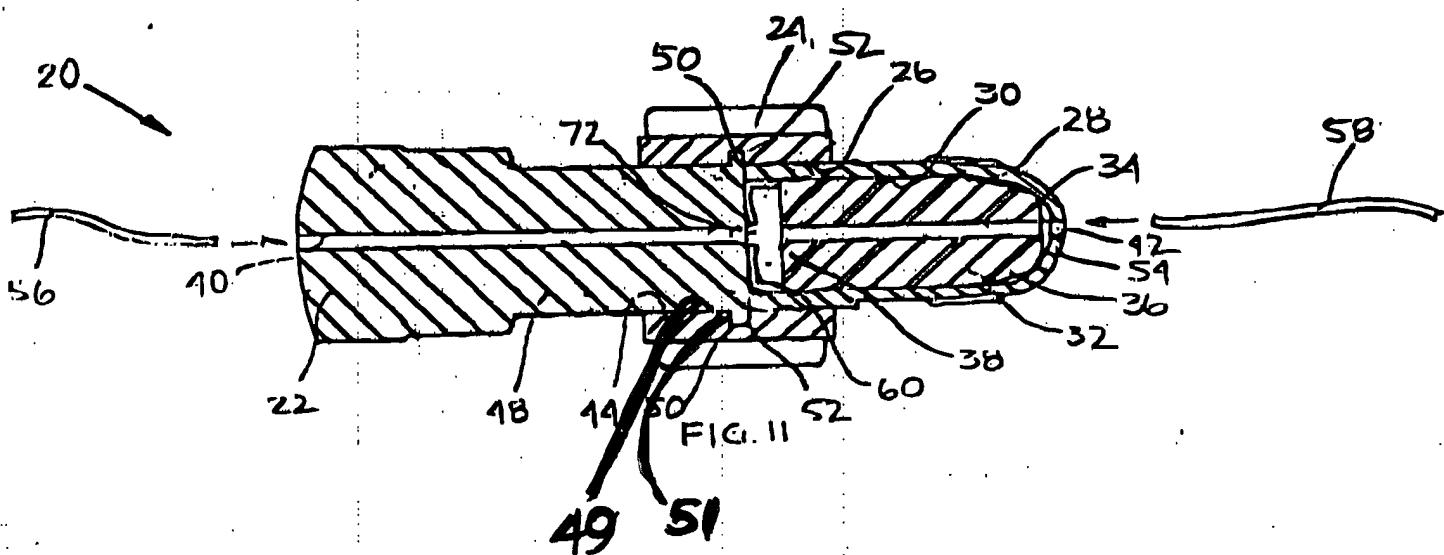


FIG. 2

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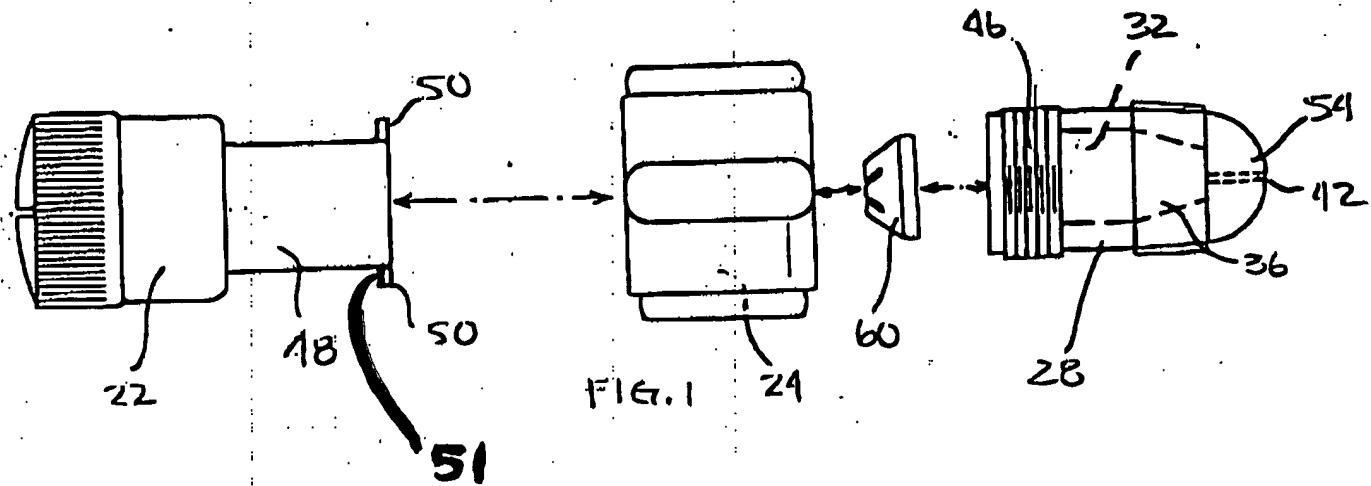


FIG. 1

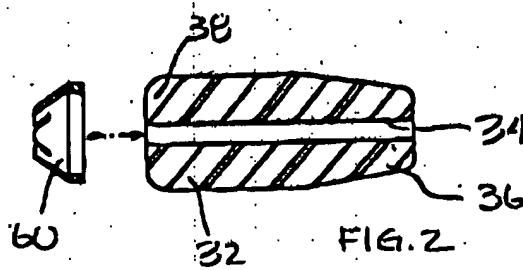
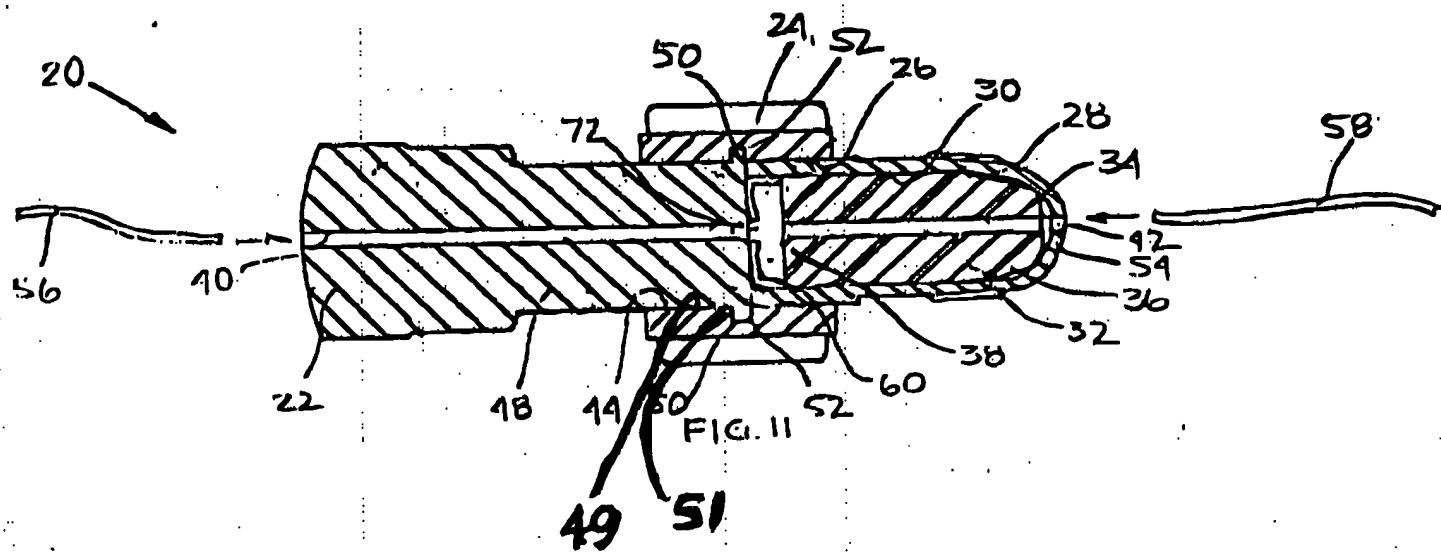


FIG. 2

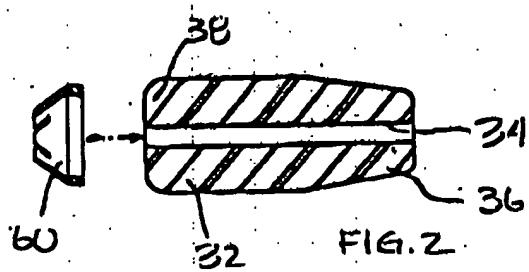
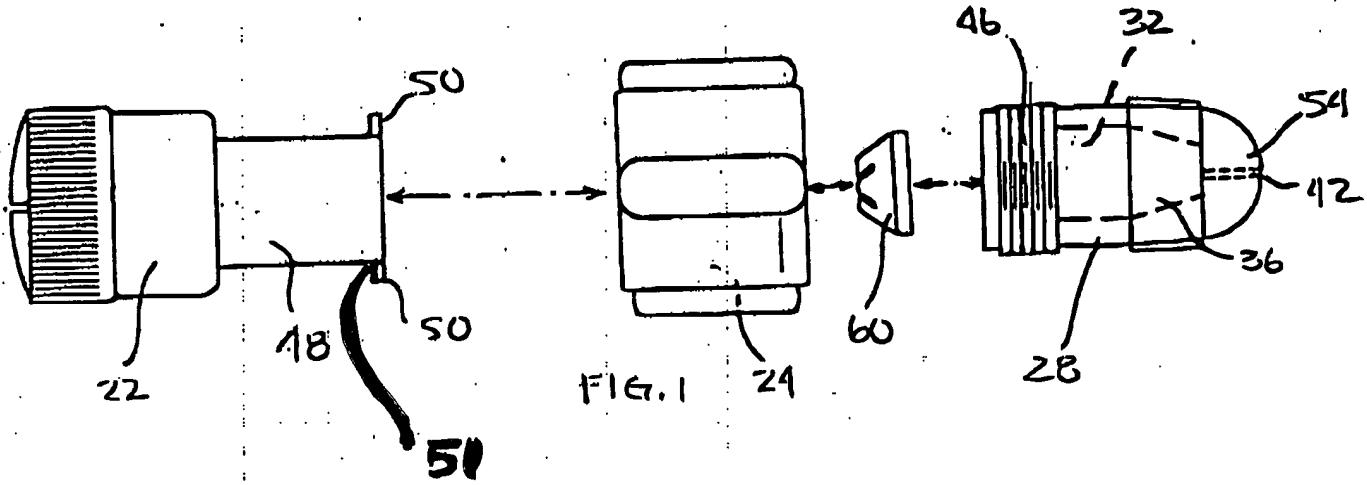
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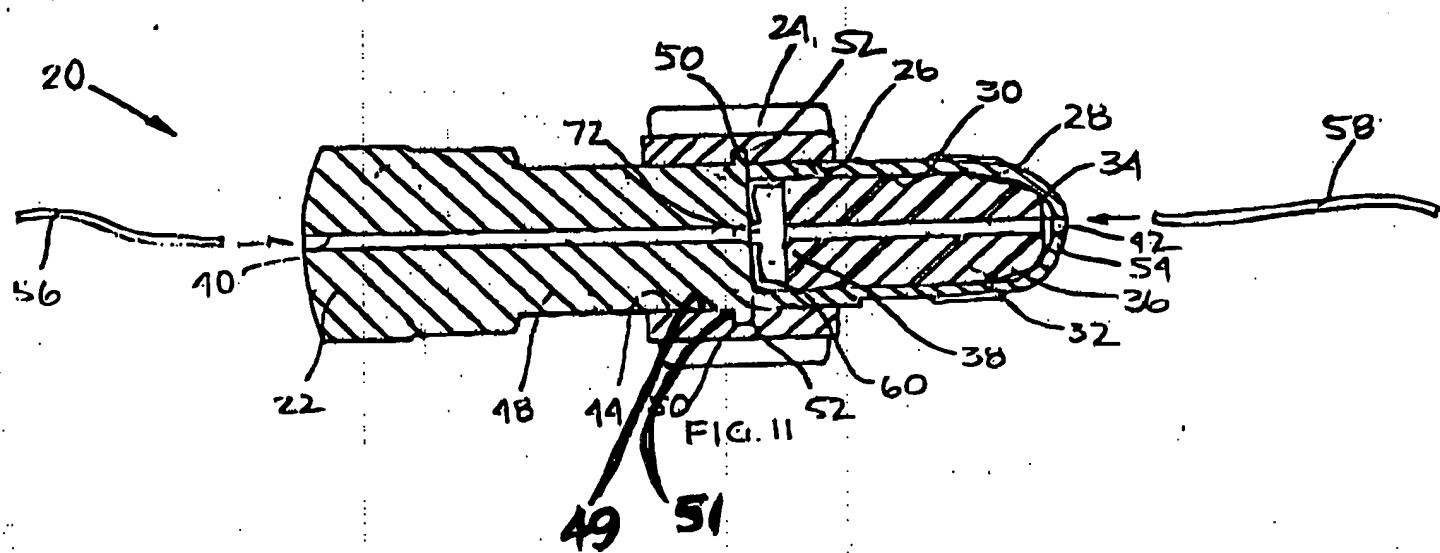
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